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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 10, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: U.S. Policy on Toxins

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I have considered the report submitted to you in response to NSSM 85, and I recommend that future U.S. policy with respect to toxins be based on Option III. The U.S. should renounce the use of toxins regardless of the method of production and limit its efforts in this field to research and development for defensive purposes only and to protect against technological surprise.

This recommendation is based on the following considerations. First, it does not seem to me that a strong case can be made for developing a retaliatory capability with toxins as a military requirement essential to U.S. security. While toxins appear to have some logistic advantages as compared to lethal chemicals, they also appear to be easier to defend against and thus would not add any significant capability to our existing and planned chemical arsenal.

On the other hand, preserving the option to develop toxins would have some distinct political liabilities. It would distract from the favorable impact of your November 25 announcement on U.S. chemical warfare and biological research policy. It would make it more difficult for us to achieve international support for the U.K. draft Convention, the principles of which you endorsed in your November 25 statement. It would be likely to complicate our efforts to gain Senate ratification of the Geneva Protocol. Finally, if the U.S. were to maintain

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the option to develop toxins it would make it more difficult for us to limit such programs by others.

I believe that any announcement that you make with respect to our policy on toxins needs to be carefully couched. If you do adopt Option III, there is some risk (which we regard as small) that we will find ourselves subjected to pressures to expand restraints on chemical weapons inasmuch as toxins are chemicals. Therefore, I recommend that the Interdepartmental Political-Military Group be charged with the preparation, for your approval, of a public policy statement describing our policy on toxins and relating it to your earlier policy announcement.



Acting Secretary

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